



# Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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## Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

### MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

#### RiverCOG Members:

Chester: Lauren Gister \*  
Clinton: Christine Goupil \*  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \*  
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. \*  
Durham: Laura Francis \*  
East Haddam: Emmett Lyman \*  
East Hampton: Jeremy DeCarli \*  
Essex: Norm Needleman \* (until 10:00)  
Haddam: Lizz Milardo \*  
Killingworth: Cathy Iino \*  
Lyme: Steve Mattson \* (until 10:30)  
Middlefield: Ed Bailey \*  
Middletown: Joe Samolis  
Old Lyme: Bonnie Reemsnyder \*  
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna \*  
Portland: Susan Bransfield \* (until 10:30)  
Westbrook: Noel Bishop \*

#### MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs \*  
Estuary Transit District: Joe Comerford  
Middletown Area Transit: Lisa Seymour

#### Others Present:

Pat Bandzes, Eversource  
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT  
Laurie McElwee, The Kennedy Center  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor  
Cathy Lezon, Eversource  
Kevin Budris, Conservation Law Foundation  
Clayton Northgraves, Dept. of Emergency Services & Public Protection  
Bill Ewell, Dept. of Emergency Services & Public Protection  
Rick Darin, Valley Shore Emergency Services  
Emily Boushee, Senator Chris Murphy's Office

**RiverCOG**

**Staff Present:**

Sam Gold  
Robert Haramut  
Eliza LoPresti  
Janice Ehle/Meyer  
Margot Burns  
Dan Bourret

**1. Call to Order, Roll Call/Introductions, Public Speaking**

Chairman Anthony Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at RiverCOG, 145 Dennison Road, Essex, CT.

Roll was called by Sam Gold, Executive Director.

**2. Public Speaking:**

Kevin Budris of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) presented on their zero waste project. The CLF is working on an upgraded bottle bill in CT (from \$0.05 to \$0.10 redemption fee), with an automatic escalator included if the rate of redemption dips below 80%. They are also proposing expanding the types of containers that can be redeemed to include condiment bottles, all glass, iced tea, sports drinks, wine & liquor bottles and more. Attorney Budris also discussed local ordinances strengthening the single-use plastic ban.

Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor, reported that she has received questions on the ballot designs for municipal elections. The top line is determined by the party of the Governor, and the rest is ordered by lottery. She discussed that family members of candidates can be poll workers but cannot handle ballots. April 28, 2020 will be the presidential primary, which she highlighted for municipal leaders to be conscious of public safety, especially if polling places are at schools because it will be very busy. She asked that CEOs reach out to her if they feel that their technology resources are lacking.

Pat Bandzes, Eversource, reminded the CEOs of the municipal energy efficiency meeting held a few months back, and how at that time it was suggested that we set up a meeting for superintendents and/or facilities directors. That meeting will be held on Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> at RiverCOG. Ms. LoPresti will re-send the invitation.

Emily Boushee, Community Outreach Coordinator for Senator Chris Murphy, stated that if anyone has a manufacturing facility they would like Sen. Murphy to stop into to please let her know. Applicants for the Senate youth program are due Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> – this is a scholarship for outstanding high school students to attend a program in Washington DC for a week. CT is receiving 5.9 million in federal opioid money to help track overdoses. There is additional state opioid response grant money coming as well.

**3. Overview of the State of Connecticut Radio System – Clayton Northgraves**

Mr. Northgraves, from the Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection explained that the State of CT has a new communications network that municipalities are allowed to join because of significant signal expansion and upgrades to the system. The system, CTS, can provide large volume discounts, and allow users to talk throughout the state and

anywhere else that exists in the system, has 24-7 engineering and monitoring, and can be used for more than just public safety (public works, transit, boards of education, etc.). There are multiple ways to utilize the system and can vary by town.

#### 4. LCRVMPO Business

- a. Approval of Minutes of the August 28 2019 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

*Upon motion of Mr. McDonald, seconded by Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve the August 28, 2019 Minutes of the LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting.*

- b. Endorse 2020 CTDOT Safety Performance Measure Targets

*Mr. Fortuna moved to endorse the 2020 CTDOT Safety Performance Measure Targets. Second made by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

- c. Other Transportation Updates

- i. Update on Corridor & Bus Studies – A public meeting to present the final recommendations in the Route 81 study will be held next week.

A Route 66 advisory committee will be held in a few weeks; a public information meeting will be held Nov. 20 at the East Hampton Library. The final report will most likely be available in spring.

Pop-up information sessions are being held during the next two days for the Transit Integration Study. There is a survey out on the on-demand transit service that ETD has been providing.

- ii. 5310 Minibus Grants – For the New Haven TMA (capital side) there were 7 applications for vehicles; 6 were funded. In our region the adult vocational program in Chester was funded. In the operating side there were 7 or 8 applications and they were all approved, including those from Estuary Transit, and another year of funding for the mobility manager. In the Harford TMA, the Cromwell application was not funded.

#### 5. LCRVCOG Business

- a. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Consultant Selection

Five firms responded to the RFP, the top 4 will be interviewed next week.

*Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Milardo, the Chairman and/or Executive Director are authorized to enter into agreement with the consultant selected by the selection committee. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: This will be funded by the one-time windfall from the RSG. The most expensive firm has been eliminated. The deliverable is the completed Regional PoCD. There is not a timeline for which it is due, but timeline is one of the criteria for selection. So is public outreach to each town.*

b. Membership Request to become a permanent member of the Lower CT River Land Trust

*Upon motion of Ms. Gister and second of Mr. Bailey, the COG officially requests to be a permanent member of the Lower Connecticut River Land Trust. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: Our executive committee has been serving as a caretaker board of directors for the land trust and now we are trying to get land trusts more involved in the running of it so they can do more work toward raising money for conservation and for our region's land trusts. We are asking all land trusts to become permanent members, and once they are they are able to sit for election for the board, hopefully by their December meeting.*

*Upon motion of Ms. Iino and second of Ms. Francis, it was unanimously voted to add item 5c to the agenda: "Resolution to contract with Dewberry for Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (pending FEMA funding)".*

c. Resolution to contract with Dewberry for Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (pending FEMA funding)

Four firms responded to the RFP for a consultant to work on the regional haz mit plan. Three were interviewed after eliminating the most expensive firm. Dewberry has been recommended by the selection committee; they will be partnering with Milone & MacBroom. We are still waiting on funding from FEMA, so approval will be contingent upon receiving the grant funding from that agency. Delay in having the regional plan will not preclude a town from receiving disaster recovery funding. The CEOs asked to have it in writing that we are still covered while this process is going on. It was suggested that Senator Murphy's office may be able to help. Mr. Gold also discussed an option in which the 25% match funding from the towns could be used for the consultant to begin work until the FEMA funds are awarded.

*Upon motion of Ms. Gister and second of Mr. Bishop, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution to contract with Dewberry for the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (pending FEMA funding).*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold will look into whether it is permissible to start the work with COG funding.*

## **6. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports**

Executive Director Gold stated that he received the RSG letter from the Secretary of OPM, though it is a quarter late. The letter asked the COG to identify opportunities for regionalism. This will be discussed further at the executive committee meeting then brought forth to the full COG.

Mr. Gold has been part of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) working group on shared services. There has been discussion on the notwithstanding language in the budget that allows towns to work together, though there is no roadmap for how to use it (in reference to shared building officials, ZEOs, etc.)

Suggested topics for sharing discussions: EMS, Title 7, Independent taxing districts, PSAPs, ability to pay taxes online, share staff, parcel mapping, some DMV functions, etc.).

County equivalency is still being worked on. We are now looking at asking to list the planning regions as special geography, so that in the census there will be two separate geographies (historic counties and current planning regions), with a 10 year phase in. There is a simple suggested addition/change to the current statute that would allow COGs to be treated as counties to receive federal “gifts”.

Financial report: we are currently spending within parameters and closed out the fiscal year with a \$168,000 fund balance due to increased match on projects.

## 7. Other Business

- a. Letter to CTDEEP regarding aquatic invasive species

A letter was drafted to the Commissioner of DEEP asking them to look at using the money in the fund for boat registration to help abate invasive species in the river by creating lower CT river program for invasives, increase the clean, drain & dry program, and fund the Ag Station program to monitor and steward the lower river.

*Upon motion of Ms. Reemsnyder and second of Mr. McDonald, it was unanimously voted to approve, sign and send out this letter.*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold added that he received an email yesterday that the Army Corps of Engineers is looking for environmental projects along lakes and rivers; conversations will be held with Sen. Murphy’s office to see if they would be interested in taking on some of the projects discussed in the letter. Ms. Goupil added that Clinton is working with CTDOT, who are cutting into channels to help abate phragmite by killing it with salt water.*

- b. Distribution of regional parcel layer to CT Forest & Park Association

Mr. Bourret received a request from Northeast Geosystems in Middletown to provide a regional parcel layer to support CT Forest & Park trail maintenance and property updating.

*Upon motion of Ms. Francis and second of Mr. Bailey, it was unanimously approved that the parcel layer be distributed to NE Geosystems on behalf of CT Forest & Park Association.*

Ms. Francis thanked Ms. Burns for coming the resilience building workshop held in Durham; a report is pending. This was done in partnership with SustainableCT.

Ms. Francis noted that CCM has developed a print department in-house, with reasonable prices.

The October COG meeting will be held Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> at Lyman Orchards in Middlefield.

## 8. Adjournment

*Upon motion of Ms. Milardo and second of Ms. Reemsnyder, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 a.m.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti, Recording Secretary